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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 001610

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM CU FR EUN

SUBJECT: FRANCE QUIETLY SUPPORTS SPANISH APPROACH ON CUBA

REF: STATE 52623

Classified By: PolMC Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4 (B & D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: MFA DAS-equivalent for Cuba Blandine Kreiss defended FM Moratinos' visit to Cuba, arguing the necessity of re-establishing government-to-government relations between Cuba and the EU and the need to give the human rights mechanism more time before judging its effectiveness. More generally, she was adamant on the advantages of dialogue over pressure in effecting change on Cuba, arguing that the Cuban people themselves did not wish outside intervention and that outside pressure (read the U.S. embargo) was ineffective in any case. Kreiss expressed concern that the U.S. might hold the U.S.-EU declaration "hostage" to the Cuban issue and argued against "individualized" treatment of certain countries including Cuba. All that said, France is likely to take a low profile in EU discussions until after a new government comes to power. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) POL Deputy discussed reftel demarche April 20 to MFA DAS-equivalent for Cuba and the Caribbean Blandine Kreiss, stressing the unilateral nature of the Moratinos visit to Cuba and his failure to meet with dissidents and civil society figures and U.S. concern over the message Moratinos was sending with respect to EU support for democratic change.

He also sought French views on the impact of the Moratinos visit on internal EU discussions on next steps.

#### MORATINOS VISIT

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¶3. (C) Kreiss defended Spanish FM Moratinos' visit to Cuba, arguing that, if Moratinos himself did not meet with civil society representatives, his Americas Director had invited dissidents to a meeting and spoken by phone with those who had declined to attend in order to explain Spanish objective of moving EU-Cuba relations toward normalization under certain conditions. She said it would be premature to judge whether the human rights consultation mechanism would prove effective; this would require some time. When POL Deputy interjected that the Cuban government was claiming that human rights consultations would not cover Cuba's internal issues, she responded that the GOC did not wish to appear to be yielding to outside pressure.

¶4. (C) As for high-level visits in general, Kreiss noted that the restrictions agreed in 2003 had already been suspended; her view was that they should be dropped altogether. The EU's double-track approach consisted of maintaining simultaneous political and civil society dialogues; she allowed that FM Moratinos had taken a risk, but she viewed it as a necessary one, since the liberation of political prisoners was not possible without dialogue. Calling the Cubans a proud people, she noted that dissidents themselves did not wish intervention from either the EU or the United States. She fully expected that Cuba, if it ever decided to release political pressures, would do so little by

little, not as a grand gesture.

EU DELIBERATIONS AND U.S.-EU SUMMIT

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¶5. (C) POL Deputy noted the apparent unilateral nature of Moratinos' visit and asked what impact this would have on EU deliberations. Kreiss called it "understandable" that Moratinos had proceeded without consulting others, as the record of internal EU deliberations was always leaked to Havana. As for the upcoming GAERC, she expected Moratinos to deliver an "official" report on his visit; the EU's common policy was not up for renewal until June.

¶6. (C) Kreiss stated without prompting that France preferred that the U.S.-EU declaration not mention the human rights situation in Cuba, suggesting rhetorically that, if it did, mention should also be made of the human rights situations in Colombia and Guatemala. POL Deputy said it would be noticed if this year's declaration dropped language that had been included in the past; Kreiss retorted that the situation had changed (she cited the Pavone affair, where intellectuals had been allowed to protest his appearance on TV, as evidence). Kreiss warned against any U.S. attempt to take the U.S.-EU declaration "hostage" through insistence on language on Cuba, attempting to assure POL Deputy that the U.S. and the EU shared the same objectives but only disagreed on the means to obtain them. POL Deputy suggested, if that were true, it should be possible to come up with positive language on our shared goals at a minimum. Kreiss responded that the EU believed in dialogue rather than pressure, whether with respect to Cuba or Venezuela, citing the U.S. embargo as proof that sanctions do not work. (She also cited Iran as a possible example, but backtracked quickly when POL Deputy

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stated we had indications Iran was feeling the pressure.)

¶7. (C) Kreiss concluded by reiterating that Moratinos had done the right thing in unfreezing cooperation between Cuba and EU governments; this was an important development, as such cooperation was of benefit to the Cuban people. (In a personal side, Kreiss volunteered that the U.S. had missed a perfect opportunity to lift the embargo when Castro first fell ill, which she judged would have offered much more dramatic prospects for change.) She offered her view that acceptance by the EU of a new restrictive document would prompt the Cubans to refreeze government-to-government cooperation, which she argued would also not be in the U.S. interest.

¶8. (C) Kreiss noted in conclusion that France would probably assume a low profile in upcoming EU deliberations, given the ongoing French presidential election and the possibility of a change in policy by the new government.

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